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DEQ announces revisions to Complaint Policy

BATON ROUGE – In an effort to maximize the efficiency of addressing all citizen complaints, and expedite any complaint or notification to the proper agency, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has announced revisions to the DEQ Complaint Policy.

Revisions to the policy were enacted in order to streamline DEQ's emergency response mechanism while ensuring that all complaints are addressed in a prompt manner through a systematic approach. The new policy gives DEQ's regional offices authority to handle anonymous complaints in their respective regions.

DEQ's Environmental Complaint Policy was established in order to set forth guidelines and procedures to best manage departmental resources while still providing effective customer service to the citizens of the state regarding environmental complaints. DEQ's mission is to protect public health and the environment by providing a response to each environmental complaint, while bringing about statutory and regulatory compliance through a consistent and structured process.

Callers with complaints involving activities that are outside of DEQ's regulatory authority will be directed to the appropriate agency. Complaints will be logged into DEQ's internal database and a copy of the Incident Report will be forwarded to the Electronic Document Management System (EDMS), which is online and accessible to the general public. Common examples of such complaints include, but are not limited to complaints regarding agricultural activities (chicken litter, crop burning, pesticide/herbicide application, crop duster activities); drinking water quality; indoor air quality, and mold-related problems.

For complaints that constitute an emergency condition, DEQ has procedures to ensure that the proper state and local authorities are informed of the emergency. If appropriate, DEQ regional emergency responders will be dispatched. Examples of an emergency condition are generally in regard to a spill, release or uncontrolled/unauthorized discharge that may endanger the health and safety of the public, cause significant adverse impact to the land, water or air environment, or cause severe damage to property. Complaints of a criminal nature continue to be processed and referred to both DEQ's Criminal Investigations Division and to the appropriate region for investigation, if warranted.